

RAW ILFORD HOLD WANDERERS TO A WEARISOME DRAW

Ilford 0, Wycombe
Wanderers 0

WYCOMBE WANDERERS lost more than a point in this wretched game at Ilford—they lost a little of their reputation as well. East Enders think of Wycombe soccer in terms of culture and courage, but there was precious little of either for them to view on Saturday.

By popular reckoning, this was the worst Wanderers performance on the Ilford ground for many years.

Defenders were jittery to the point of embarrassment, slicing clearances and presenting the opposing attackers with gift passes, while the forwards were methodless nomads with scarcely a shot between them.

Ilford were no better but they at least were a team of raw, young and comparatively untested players scrambled together at the beginning of the season.

But by harrying, chivvying and badgering and by dashing vigorously all over Ilford, or so it seemed, they reduced an experienced and mature team—containing two English internationals—to a travesty of Isthmian League football.

More than a thousand luckless fans, all dreaming nostalgically of Real Madrid and Barcelona television days, waited with extraordinary patience for the final whistle—and were rewarded with a rare thrill.

AWFUL PANIC

With a minute to go Barry Darvill plunged down the right wing, face grim with determination, and had the Ilford defence in an awful panic as he centered. But Rockell, tearing in, was just unable to reach for the kill.

Without a league goal after 180 minutes of Isthmian soccer, the Wycombe forwards were yards too slow. Only Rockell showed sustained pace and persistency. Len Worley, before he drifted out of the game in the second half, provided enough chances to sink Ilford, but Bates—concussed after a first half collision—wandered aimlessly.

More alarming still, Cliff Trott was only able to catch up with events, sharing a strangely ineffective left wing with Gerald Free.

Only one Wycombe player stood aloof from a rash of errors—goalkeeper Ken Brown. With full backs Ken Crack and Jack Timberlake extremely uncertain Brown could have been excused some fumbling but he handled the ball beautifully.

IRONY POINT

Wing half David Thomas was always trying to distribute the ball smoothly but he could not get a decisive grip on the mid-field play and neither could Darvill. Skipper John Bartholomew was a centre half operating in quicksands. To his credit, he never floundered.

Irony point: the result could have been very different had referee Mr. Robinson allowed a first half Wycombe "goal".

Visiting supporters thought Rockell's header had crossed the Ilford goal line before a home full-back booted clear.

Seconds before this incident Worley had seen his shot kicked off the line but Ilford narrowed the near-miss score when inside right Welsby slammed the ball against the Wycombe crossbar with the most enterprising shot of the match.

A dull first period was followed by an incredibly dreary second half. A baby could have slept peacefully in the hushed main enclosure towards the end. Concerted attacks were almost nonexistent but Wycombe fans had to thank Rockell for a splendid effort when he flung himself at a cross from Cliff Trott and sent a glorious header glancing past the far post.

Ilford v Wycombe

ILFORD had two narrow escapes in the first half when a header by Wycombe leader Paul Bates and a shot by left-winger James were kicked off their line.

But Ilford were having most of the play in spite of the fact that their two star forwards Winch and Platt were out through injury.

Right-winger Evans menaced the Wycombe goal with some neat crosses.

Ilford inside-right Welsby crashed a 20-yard shot against the bar.

Half-time: Ilford 0, Wycombe W. 0

Ilford went close when a lobbed shot by right-half McKendry hit the bar soon after the interval.

Seconds later Evans crossed the ball in front of the goal, but no Ilford forward was able to get to it.